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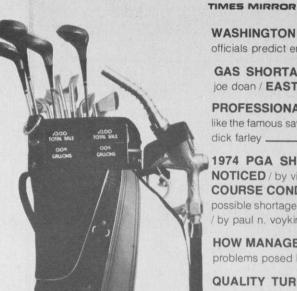
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GOLFDOM

THE BUSINESS MAGAZINE OF GOLF

VOL. 48, NO. 4, APRIL, 1974, INCORPORATING GOLF BUSINESS A PUBLICATION IN THE TIMES MIRROR COMPANY'S FAMILY OF SPECIAL INTEREST MAGAZINES



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4407 Vasconia, Tampa, Fla. 33611 (813) 839-0082

GEORGIA: 2045 Peachtree Rd., N.E. Suite 315, Atlanta, Ga. 30309 (404) 233-5077.

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DETROIT: Sales Motivating Associates ROBERT W. MORIN, 19400 W. 10 Mile Rd., Suite 216, Southfield, Mich. 48075 (313) 352-8333

WESTERN REGION & MEXICO: Graves & Associates, CLARK GRAVES, 4311 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 610, Los Angeles, Calif. 90010 (213) 933-8408

PUBLISHED 10 TIMES A YEAR; MONTHLY JANUARY THROUGH SEPTEMBER, AND NOVEMBER BY TIMES MIRROR MAGAZINES, INC. 380 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017

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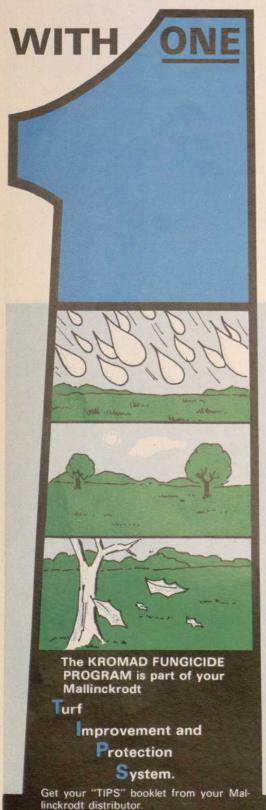
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ANSWERING ONE CRITICISM

A club manager whom I have known for several years has written to take exception to a recent column on stabilizing menu prices (November/December, 1973, GOLFDOM, p. 7). Although he appears to misunderstand one of my comments in that column, he also makes some very valid points that are well worth reviewing.

The column in question discusses the fact that stable menu prices are one of the more easily recognized sign-posts of a club's over-all financial stability, a sound purchasing policy is one way to achieve such stability and that the hallmarks of such a policy are product specifications, competitive bidding, immediate use buying and immediate pay buying.

Those portions of his letter that apply to the column appear in italics. My comments follow his letter.

"... This article by inference seems very critical of country club managers.

"Most of the country club managers that I know are fairly knowledgeable in the basics of food buying and related subjects. There are few absolutes in the world, and when [you state], 'Instituting any of these measures will stablize menu prices,' [you are stating] an absolute which is open to challenge.

"Country Club Managers are under constant pressure from their members, particularly their golfing members, to reduce menu prices regardless of the financial base from which they operate. Some clubs which have a strong fiscal base, take a considered loss on food sales because they can afford to do so . . . Clubs that are operating on a marginal dues structure cannot be compared to [these]. Trying to suggest, therefore, that all clubs operating under different dues structures and house conditions can achieve the same results by following an arbitrary set of pre-set conditions just doesn't make sense Some of the problems that

many country clubs face are:

"LOCATION—If the club is located in a remote area, it sometimes does not have a large choice of dealers. If it buys from the nearest large city, it may find that shipping charges more than offset the cost involved in small purchases. Many purveyors are not interested in small orders, and in fact, are not concerned with the business of a club with a small volume of business. Trying to get several dealers to bid under some conditions can be an exercise in futility.

"PRICING-The influence of other eating establishments in the area. Their quality and prices, etc., which can influence the decisions of club members.

"AVAILABILITY OF MER-CHANDISE-Right now we're in a crisis of shortages (in all areas). Maybe it would be to the advantage of some clubs to increase their inventories of many products. Grave shortages of paper goods, plastics, locker building supplies, soaps, etc., are predicted. I mention this just as an indication that right now things are changing so rapidly that we've got to be prepared to change our procedures and policies just as quickly.

"But let me get back to my main point. Although probably well-intentioned, I do think that [your] article could, and very well may, cause some club officers and committees to zero in on many country club managers in a critical way, on issues which are not too easily resolved, as [your] article suggests."

I stand behind the theses of the column, but my friend is quite right to challenge the first statement he quotes. What I should have said, of course is that, "Instituting any of these measures will *help* stabilize menu prices."

Unfortunately, I had assumed (a dangerous practice at any time) that a reference in an earlier paragraph to the need for good internal controls as well as an adequate purchasing policy

would modify the statement and make it clear that purchasing was only one of several activities that would stabilize menu prices. Both my writing and my logic were a bit careless and I stand corrected.

Several other comments in the letter are well worth re-reading. Although I cannot agree with all their conclusions, I would call special attention to those portions headed location, pricing and availability of merchandise. I am pleased that they were called to my attention because they raise problems common to many clubs.

I am in complete agreement that the prices and food quality of other eating establishments have a direct effect on the pricing practices of nearby clubs. I am also in general agreement with the writer's thoughts on buying in anticipation of shortages-providing full consideration is given to those cautions noted in my earlier article, which did, in fact, recommend the practice after full consideration of the problems of storage, security, fire insurance and cash flow. I would now add one additional word of warning. The column in question was written before the current shortage situation became evident, and although I agree that a manager should protect his club, it also occurs to me that his efforts should be consistent with setting a good example to the community. I would hate to see clubs, already under considerable public attack, accused of hoarding. Certainly, a club should be sufficiently farsighted to buy those items it feels it needs and can obtain-within the dictates of good judgement. Heavy "crisis" buying offers, at best, only temporary protection from shortages and must be carefully weighed against the possible adverse aspects of the action.

I must also take some exception to the comments on location. I agree that an isolated club must deal with some additional difficulties; I do not agree that securing bids is one of them.

continued on page 70



DO SUPERINTENDENTS PLAY ENOUGH GOLF?

A golf professional whom I regard as a first-class businessman made me wonder about that question when he said that he wished he could play at least a round a week with the club's superintendent.

This professional is a veteran. He was a caddie in the days when many courses were managed by pro-greenkeepers. He knows that there is more play when the condition of the course is good. Then shop sales are better. The old pro says, "With all the improvements in machinery and materials, the superintendent's job is tougher than it used to be. Now most golfers expect the course to be perfect always, but from the divots, ball dents and cigarette butts on greens and bottles, cans and packages that are tossed around, I am afraid that there are too many golfers who don't appreciate that they, too, are responsible for the condition of the course.

"Our superintendent is one of the finest young men I've ever known in golf. He works day and night. He's worth every penny the club pays him. I can't imagine any man on his job knowing grass and landscaping better than he. But he's got plenty to learn about golfers. And how can he learn that? He's too busy worrying and working on grass to learn about the needs of golfers of whom he is one and typical: overworked, worried and needing the escape golf can give.

"I know what he's up against. It's my trouble, too. I have too many things to do before I can play golf and be reminded of what golfers are up

against."

If every superintendent and professional at every course would play a round a week of golf, they would know what should be done to make the course a more pleasant playground.

What the superintendent, professional, club officials and members need is a golf course that's a nursery for golfers before it's a nursery for grass.

I had to laugh when the old pro concluded, "What am I dreaming about, playing with my friend who runs the course when I don't even have enough time to play with the members I should play with at least once a year? This is a job with a hell of a lot of simple problems that are hard to solve."

There are a lot of lessons the golf business can learn from the tennis boom.

The first is that members will pay a good price for what they want at a good club.

Those tennis schools that involve tutoring, playing and living expense, charge \$90 a day and have all the pupils their pros can handle. Yet, in the opinion of country club management, tennis usually is a deficit operation for the club, because tennis players don't yield profitable bar and restaurant volumes.

Recently the graphite shaft phenomenon has surprised officials. Golfers will spend the money for something they want. Professionals have been amazed at seeing graphite-shafted drivers, costing more than \$100, showing up in bags of players who haven't bought clubs in years.

One professional told me last winter, "What worries me is that my club doesn't know how to use what I know about golf."

That statement shocked me. Mac Hunter, whose wonderfully helpful father I'd known previously, told me he was switching from a fine job at the Riviera CC to be in a consulting business and direct sales of a graphite shaft company, because he didn't feel that, as a club professional, he was doing the good that he knew he could do for golf and his club and golfers.

A couple of fellows in the shop were asking about lessons. My friend said, "There is the book. There are 41 lessons ahead. I really wish I could take care of you right now, but I have to tend the store and sell balls and shirts. Then I have to make out the tickets for cars and guests, assign starting times and set things for our ladies' tournament next Tuesday, tease a member into buying the new clubs he ought to have instead of the museum relics he has and settle a rules argument while my assistant is at lunch.'

Hunter went on, "This is the sort of situation common at many pro shops. It makes me believe completely that you are right in what you've been writing about the old half-hour lesson being out-grown. In most of the lessons I have booked, I would do better for my pupils and the club and myself in a few minutes by showing the pupils how to teach himself.

"I've never had to spend much time really teaching golf, except to show the pupil how to learn a few simple things. Then I allow him to work it out for himself.

"If my club and I could figure out sensible use of my time on the lesson tee, we would have more good golfers."

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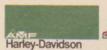
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GRAFFIS from page 8

hired Don Rossi to run its show, subject to the policies and budgets of its directors, golf business was very lucky. That has been proved.

Rossi had been a high school and college athlete, coach and official. He has been a successful salesman of golf and other sporting goods. He has done, unquestionably, the best job of directing and conducting a military physical conditioning and athletic recreation program since George Washington ordered his troops to stand in a circle and kick each other in the fanny with blanketed feet to keep from freezing at Valley Forge.

Rossi was early and loud in recognizing that golf has a dual nature, as a golf and as a business. The shy ones, sometimes, have suggested that Rossi is too forceful, but none of his bosses nor anyone else in the golf business has questioned his quality as one hell of a strong team player who looks and works for a big, bright tomorrow in golf business.

Rossi got his National Golf Foundation staff together early this year for a look at the golf business of today and tomorrow. It probably was the most significant event in the business phase of golf. To a reporter who sees golf as surging over from the toy department into business and social and general news pages, the program that Rossi's staff presented had many important

Certainly not the least important to professional golf was the survey on golf education by Lorraine Abbott.

It must be a shock to male professionals to learn that Ms. Abbott gets around to more golf instructors than any other golf teacher. She gets around to many seminars run by the golf physical educators at colleges and universities. About 65 per cent of private club lessons are given to women. The collegiate division between boys and girls is about 50-50.

Ms. Abbott reported at the Golf Foundation's annual round-up of golf business that there'd better be far more accent on golf learning than on golf instruction. The instructor has not modernized his or her methods to make the pupil the responsible party in the lesson, with the teacher supplying a few basics from which the command of pretty fair golf technique could be worked out. The male professionals long have known that effective golf instruction is about 80 per cent learning and 20 per cent instruction, but haven't been able to modernize the technique or shake away from the obsolete half-hour lesson.

The National Golf Foundation is planning to update its classic film of the elementals of golf. It has been seen by six million people. It is the primer. It's being changed because the dress fashions have changed.

The foundation's primer on golf is a book that has sold 400,000 copies in its present edition. In the original giveaway, the dime and quarter edition, the book had the world's largest circulation of any sport instruction book-725,000.

Modernizing the script of the golf instruction film may or may not be historic in sports.

Where is the genius to do this job? Golf has been looking for him for about 70 years, ever since the playing lesson went out of use because golf club professionals didn't have enough time for it.

